

Wycombe Wanderers 2, Barking 1

WYCOMBE WANDERERS lined themselves up with a grandstand finale to the season by edging out Barking in their tight-fought Premier Floodlight League semi-final replay at Loakes Park on Tuesday evening.

They now close their programme, again on home ground, next Monday, meeting formidable Surrey team, Walton and Hersham in the final, when they will be defending the title they claimed last season — from previous champions Walton.

Probability is, that there'll be very little to choose between the two sides as, in fact, there was in Tuesday's replay.

TRADITION

The match followed the tradition of close affairs Wycombe seem to have developed with their Essex rivals in recent years. Barking, faced by the long journey across London, turned up just before scheduled kick off time, which meant a 22 minute delay before a crowd of just over the 1,000 mark saw what they had come hoping to see — an entertaining evening's football.

The danger was that Wycombe's current trend towards apathy would ruin their chances. And the absence of fluffer, John Delaney, also added fuel to the pessimists' fire.

So when Barking went ahead through a soft 3rd minute goal, "the worst" could quite easily have been feared. It was a typical lesson in why a defence should play to the whistle and not anticipate the referee.

As Wycombe were to find out, Mr. Smith was hardly predictable in his decisions at the best of times and soon fell victim to some jibes from the home crowd.

The goal, lobbed home from close in by Alan Kiff punished Wycombe for their failure to play safe.

Although Wycombe accounted for a hefty majority of the attacking moves made during the 90 minutes, in the first half they never really looked likely to equalise. Barking breakaways, with Fox and ex-Skelmersdale man Bradley to the fore, were sharper and, in due course, put the home defence through the mincer.

FINE, KEVIN

Kevin O'Brien however held out in fine style, while Ian Rundle, as at Barking, was giving nothing away. Still Neville Fox had a chance to increase

viction to their second half football and, boosted by the activities of little Geoff Anthony, gave Barking's backs a severe testing.

In an incident on the edge of the visitors' 'box', Rundle had his shirt ripped, although the only injury of the period came in the 72nd minute, to Walters — who suddenly went down clutching his right leg, while chasing a loose ball along the touchline, with no one within ten yards of him.

Walters received treatment off the field before hobbling back to the dressing rooms to be replaced by substitute Long.

WILD, BERNIE

Two minutes later, Bernie Bremer crashed the ball wildly across the face of the visitors' net, and another four minutes elapsed before Keith Searle popped up for one of his few chances of the night, heading the ball over the bar.

But, with eight minutes to

play, Wanderers found the decisive scoring touch, from a free kick to the left, about 25 yards out from goal. Iain MacLean purposely overran the dead ball, and Bremer drove his kick through the area and into the left side of Barking's net, with 'keeper Billy Hadlow unsighted. So, despite the absence of set-piece specialist Delaney, both goals had evolved in this way.

Barking's fortunes failed again when, 60 seconds later, Mel Jones was booked for dissent.

W Y C O M B E W A N D E R E R S :
O'Brien; Fuschillo, MacLean, Powell, Rundle, Baker, Anthony, Bremer, Searle, Horseman, Hutchinson, Sub., Gale (not used).

B A R K I N G : Hadlow; Jones, Butcher, Bullman, Boyton, Walters, (Sub, Long, '75 mins.), Sprague, Kiff, Fox, Page, Bradley.

Referee: Mr. C. C. Smith (East Croydon).

Official paying attendance: 1,005.
Half-time: 1-1. Goalscorers:
Wycombe—Fuschillo (1st half ini-
time), Bremer (82). Barking—Kiff
(3).